

Family centre service

Speak to us on 0300 123 7572

Register and get started

What's on?

Find your local family centre

Parent survival kit – advice and support

Family Centres Website - Discovery Summary

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What we wanted to know

We wanted to find out how professionals and parents use the Family Centres website.

Does it meet their needs?

Do they have any problems using it?

What we did first

We sent out a survey to frontline health and family support staff.

We asked them what the most popular types of enquiry they receive from parents are, and how these are handled.

What the survey told us

Health staff (51 responses)

The top enquiries health staff they receive from parents are:

- sleep support
- feeding advice
- child development

94% of health staff answer enquiries themselves.

The top websites they use for info are:

- HCT website (88%)
- NHS.UK (78%)
- Family Centres (41%)

What the survey told us

Family support staff (96 responses)

The top enquiries family support staff receive from parents are:

- what's on/centre re-openings
- parenting support/advice
- vitamins

75% of family support staff answer enquiries themselves.

The top websites they use for info are:

- Family Centres (66%)
- NHS.UK (44%)
- HCT site (41%)

What we did next

We devised some tasks based on these survey results.

We then conducted 1:1 testing sessions with 9 health staff, 5 family support staff, and 7 parents.

We watched how they interacted with the website, and asked them about their experiences using it.

What we discovered from professionals

Professionals use the site for 3 key reasons:

- To register families (Family Support staff)
- To make referrals (NHS staff)
- To find activities (NHS staff)

What we discovered from professionals

- Health enquiries are being served by prior knowledge and network support from colleagues.
- Professionals use specialist, recognised websites when looking for more detailed information e.g. First Steps Nutrition and ERIC.
- Facebook is the most popular source of information for events.

What we discovered from parents

How parents defined the family centre service:

"A social network for classes, groups, and advice"

*"An early years **information** and **support** service for families"*

"A birth to 5 years one stop shop for different services"

*"A community **hub** where everyone with children under the age of 11 should be able to get the **information** they need for their local area"*

*"**Support** for parents and under 5's"*

*"A **support hub** for family needs"*

*"**Support** and activities"*

What we discovered from parents

- Most parents have never used the Family Centres website before.
- Most (57%) first hear of the Family Centre service via their Health Visitor.
- 29% first hear of the service via their Midwife.
- Parents place a high level of trust in the Family Centre service

What we discovered from parents

- 86% of parents use a mobile device to go online
- They don't like using maps to find their local centre
- 86% go to Google for general information
- 86% go to the NHS for health – NHS logo is reassuring
- 57% go to Facebook for events/activities
- All parents use the 'Red Book' – 71% for weighing and vaccine records

Key issues discovered while testing

Search bar hidden (high)

Not obvious where the search bar is on the homepage - it doesn't show until you click the hamburger:



Recommendation: Have search bar showing on all pages by default.

Key issues discovered while testing

Search terms not being recognised (high)

A number of key search terms have no results at all, and some result in links where the connection between the term used and the resulting link isn't always obvious e.g. "illness":

Search Results

Results 1 - 3 of about 3 results for **illness**

[Timeline of information for families](#)
Health and social information for families, from conception to 5.

[Mental health and relationship advice for families](#)
There are some common mental health problems you may experience as a parent. We can support you in your home or guide you to more help.

[Feeding your baby](#)
Support for whichever way you choose to feed your baby

Recommendation: Review keywords and ensure more relevant link titles are displayed in search results.

Key issues discovered while testing

Unclear page titles (medium)

A number of page titles are unclear so users don't know what to expect from the content. Makes the site harder to navigate.

Examples:

- 'Timeline of information for families'
- 'The grown up stuff'
- 'Parents and mums – to-be' vs 'Healthy families = Happy families' (users uncertain on the difference)

Recommendation: Rename/reduce content to remove areas of overlap/duplication. Users commented that the site is text heavy with too much to read.

Key issues discovered while testing

Breastfeeding content (medium)

Parents feel the tone of this content is insensitive as not all mothers are able to breastfeed. It doesn't tell parents anything they wouldn't already know.

Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is a great way to get your baby off to the best start. You may consider breastfeeding your baby as:

- breast milk is the best food your baby can have – it's tailor-made for your baby
- breast milk boosts your baby's ability to fight illness and infection in their first 6 months. Evidence shows that babies who are breastfed are less likely to get diarrhoea and respiratory infections, particularly in the early months
- breastfeeding lowers your risk of breast cancer and ovarian cancer – it also burns about 500 calories a day
- it's a great way to strengthen the bond between you and your baby
- breastfeeding your baby can help their brain to grow.

Recommendation: soften tone - don't state the obvious, and don't suggest that burning calories is an incentive to breastfeed (was seen as offensive).

Key issues discovered while testing

Health visitors information not needed (low)

Users already know what a health visitor is and would just contact them in the first place. 57% of parents first hear of Family Centres via their health visitor.

Health visitors are nurses or midwives who specialise in the health and development of pre-school children.

They offer confidential health advice and support to Hertfordshire residents, from pregnancy right through to your little one turning 5 years old.

[How to get in touch](#) >

[What they can help with](#) >

[When they'll contact you](#) >

Recommendation: Reduce content - all users need is a clear phone number.

Key issues discovered while testing

Hero image (low)

Users don't like the hero image – they feel it isn't engaging and doesn't reflect the breadth of services Family Centres provide – looks too much like a nursely school class. They'd like images showing more interaction with parents.



Recommendation: Replace image. Users suggest a more cheerful montage showing Family Centre staff, family units, activities etc.

Key issues discovered while testing

Homepage categories (low)



Register and get started:

Clear - parents understand - but 'register' sounds a bit formal – ‘Sign up to join your Family Centre’ would be more welcoming.

What's on?:

Parents understand but could be even clearer e.g. ‘What's on in our centres’ or ‘Family Centres events guide’

Find your local family centre:

Clear, but note that parents expect a postcode search after this - maps aren't popular.

Parent survival kit - advice and support:

Parents don't like the word 'survival.' 71% commented that this sounds negative – parents suggest ‘Advice and support’

Key issues discovered while testing

Events (medium)

Event links – not obvious to users what the difference between these are. If looking for an event from this page most would select 'Events we're running online.' Note most parents use Facebook for events.

Stay up to date on our events:

- [Events we're running online](#)
- [Follow on Facebook](#)
- [Join our newsletter](#)

Get tickets for our bookable events on [Eventbrite](#)

Eventbrite - not all users know what this is, and those that do don't see why they'd click it before seeing what's on offer.

Event calendar - users expect direct links to book from calendar PDF. Users don't like the use of green and purple on these:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
MORNING					
AFTERNOON					

Recommendations: Have a single event booking link upfront. Have link to Eventbrite showing after events are listed, not before.

Add bookable links to event calendars – keep calendar colours neutral/black and white

Key issues discovered while testing

Area accordion listed venues aren't links (medium)

Parents expect venues listed within [area accordions](#) to be clickable links:

We also have activities at:

- Heath Lane Family Centre, Hemel Hempstead
- The Lanes Family Centre, Kings Langley
- Cedar Tree Family Centre, Hemel Hempstead
- Galley Hill Family Centre, Hemel Hempstead
- Green Lane Family Centre, Hemel Hempstead
- Little Hands and Feet Family Centre, Berkhamsted
- Orchard Family Centre, Tring
- Three Villages Family Centre, Kings Langley.

Recommendation: Ensure these link to venue information wherever possible.

Conclusion

- Findings indicate there's no user need for the site to contain health info – professionals have prior knowledge or refer to specialist health sites, and parents refer to health visitors and clinics.
- Recommendation is to remove/reduce health content and clearly signpost to definitive health sources instead.
- Parents aren't using the site.
- Professionals are using it to register families, make referrals, and to signpost to events/activities.
- Focussing on these key areas would streamline content and make the site easier to navigate, helping to further meet the needs of users.

Next steps

- Findings to be shared and discussed with service leads and stakeholders. Are there any concerns or surprises about these findings and recommendations?
- When service and stakeholders are happy to authorise changes, our content team will amend.
- We'll continue to monitor feedback and can also arrange follow up sessions with users to ensure content is meeting needs.